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THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

WORKS BY W. R. BOYCE GIBSON

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THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

BY

RUDOLF EUCKEN

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF JENA
(awarded THS NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE IN xgo8)

TRANSLATED BY

LUCY JUDGE GIBSON

(classical and ORIENTAL TRIPOSBS| CAMBRIDGE)
AND

W. R BOYCE GIBSON, M.A., D.Sc. (Oxon.)

PROFESSOR (elect) OF MENTAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

In treating the question of life's meaning and value, our aim is to press home on the individual consciousness the spiritual problems of the present day, and enlist the individual's co-operation in regard to them. This conception of our task has imposed certain limitations on our philosophical programme ; but that within these limits there is still room for enlightenment should become apparent as the work proceeds. To some the first and more critical portion of the discussion may seem too long drawn-out. But the main thesis the vindication of which brings with it as a possibility the re-establishing of life and the rebirth of culture could not be convincingly developed unless shown to be the only road to the goal. And to this end the critical treatment was indispensable. It is not an accessory, but an essential.

RUDOLF EUCKEN.

Jena, December, 1907.

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

The original work of which the present volume is the translation has already proved popular in its own country. Published in 1908, a first edition of some 4,000 copies has been sold out, and a second edition called for. This special success is symptomatic of the general esteem in which Professor Eucken's works are held in Germany. One of his larger works, now trans-

lated into English under the title of 'The Problem of Human Life,' has already reached a sale of over 10,000 copies.

Eucken's influence as a thinker has for long been felt far beyond the borders of his native land. Translations of his books have appeared in many foreign languages, including French, Italian, Swedish, Finnish, and Russian. In our own country such articles on Eucken's work as have appeared quite recently in the Times, the Guardian, and the Inquirer are significantly sympathetic and appreciative. 'It seems likely,' writes the reviewer in the Guardian, 'that for the next decade Eucken will be the leading guide for the pilgrims of thought who walk on the Idealist road.'

Eucken's philosophy has been variously described as 'The New Idealism,' a 'Religious' or 'Spiritual' Idealism, and as an 'Activism.' Its central theme to quote the title of one of his own works, as yet mi-

viii TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

translated is 'The Struggle for Spiritual Existence,' and its central persuasion is this, that nothing short of an Independent Spiritual Life in intimate communion with our own can give to the struggle a meaning and a value. The conceptions of 'immanence' and 'independence' are not easy to define, but it should be noted that, from Eucken's standpoint, the immanence of the Spiritual Life within us implies at once its transcendence over us and its independence of us. By the very intimacy of its indwelling, the Spiritual Life awakens our reverence for its own distinctive standards, values, and obligations; and at the same time convinces us that its authority, which is spiritual only in relation to our freedom, is yet not of our own making, and exists in its own right.

This essentially spiritual foundation demands for its development a broad historical outlook. If we are to rise above our finitude and grasp our true infinite nature as persons, we must turn to the manifold witness of history, and relive in sympathetic thought the world's heroic struggle for a spiritual existence. We must study the great movements of the human spirit as we learn to see in all their illuminating diversity the connected and progressive expression of a single

spiritual need. We shall then find that in seeking to solve the problem of human life on the large, historical scale, we are at the same time unravelling our own.

The Spiritual Life, so understood, is the key to Eucken's system. It explains how his philosophy can be at one and the same time a Mysticism, an Activism, and a Humanism. The ' New Idealism ' is mystical in the stress it lays on the reality and immediacy of the Spiritual Life, and on the intimacy of personal

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE ix

union between the human and the divine ; it is adivistic in its insistence that all spiritual communion is a challenge to our moral nature, and can be maintained as an inspiration only through the earnestness with which we adopt its values as authoritative over our action ; it is profoundly humanistic in the breadth and depth of its historical insight, and in its close identification of the welfare of our race with the dominance of these spiritual values.

Eucken's philosophy of life, being at root a philosophy of experience, is also a philosophy of reality. It is as truly a *Weltanschauung* as a *Lebensanschauung*, though the former is determined by the latter and not vice versa. The spiritual world is created and sustained by our spiritual faithfulness : it is the outcome of man's respect for the values and ideals of the Spiritual Life.

In conclusion we would add a word of grateful acknowledgment to the author for kindly consenting to read through all the proof-sheets, and we would point out that, in two instances, at the author's own suggestion, the translation deviates slightly from the original. The extent of the first of these changes {vide p. ii) is indicated in a footnote. The second change occurs on p. 143, towards the end of the page, where the statement of the original version, " we reject the

tendency to turn to personality as a ready cure-all for every evil of the times,' is superseded by the statement

adopted in the text.

L. J. G.

W. R. B. G.

CONTENTS

TAUa

INTRODUCTION i

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY - - 5

Older Solutions 6

Religion g

Immanental Idealism - - - 11

Modern Culture . - . - - 19

Work 19

Realistic Schemes of Life - - - - 25

The Naturalistic and Intellectualistic Solutions of
the Life-Problem - - 26

The Inadequacy of Mere Humanism - - 42

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT - - - - 59

Result of the Foregoing Inquiry - - - 59

Perplexities of the Present Situation - 66

Forecast of a Positive Solution - - -71

ATTEMPT AT RECONSTRUCTION - - - 79

The Groundwork . - - . - 79

The Main Thesis - - - - - 79

Developments - - . - - 90

Attempt to Secure a Firm Basis for Life - - 91

The Growth of Freedom and Initiative - 94

The Subdual of the Natural Man - - 99

Discussion of Doubts and Difficulties - - 117

Recapitulation .--.-- 130

Applications to Modern Life ... 138

APPENDIX 149

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

^Ias human life any meaning and value.Tl In asking this question we are under no illusion. We know that we cannot pose to-day as the possessors of a truth which we have but to unfold. The question confronts us as a problem that is still unsolved, whilst we may not renounce the attempt to solve it. That our modern era lacks all assurance in regard to its solution is a point we shall have to establish more in detail. But no subtlety of argument is needed to show that such assurance is to us indispensable. We are subject to manifold impressions, beset by endless problems, and it is hard to discern amid the maze any unity of meaning or purpose. Life, moreover, is no mere idle game ; it requires toil and labour, renunciation and sacrifice. Is it worth the toil, worth the labour ? Can the good of the whole compensate for all partial risks and losses ? Can it justify us in affirming that life is worth the living ? The question has more than a speculative interest ; for unless faith in some lofty ideal infuse zest and gladness into every department of our activity, we cannot realize the highest possi-

2 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

It is true that at certain epochs the question may lie dormant, Cltradition and social requirement lay down sure lines of guidance, and leave no room for doubting the validity of the aims that are set before usT) But once let a doubt arise, let the assumptions underlying the whole structure be called in question, and the mischief spreads like a devouring fire. The problem becomes more and more complicated the more we brood on it. We seem to overstrain our faculty when we think to prove that life, with all its apparent confusions, has still a meaning and value, and can be confidently declared to be worth the living. A paralyzing doubt saps the vitality of our age. We see a clear proof of this in the fact that, with all our astounding achievements and unremitting progress, 'we are not really happy. There is no pervading sense of confidence and security, but rather a tendency to emphasize man's insignificance, and to think meanly of his position in the universe. A closer scrutiny reveals the presence of a genuine endeavour to unify Ufe, but, even so, the processes adopted are so widely divergent as to be directly antagonistic. Alternative systems, alternative ideals, fundamentally different in kind, solicit alike our adhesion. And since no one of them is obviously and convincingly superior to the others, conflicting tendencies and standards are still the order of the day. What is supremely good to one is an unmitigated evil to another, and the first man cannot condemn too strongly that which fills the second with enthusiasm. Thus, over against a lavish output of departmental work we have to set a woeful incapacity to deal with life as a whole, and a growing uncertainty as to the goal aimed at and the nature

INTRODUCTION 3

of the path to be followed. The situation forces upon us tiie question whether, in the face of darkness, doubt, and denial, we can still wring from life a meaning and value, and whether the clashing elements

shall ever yield to the compulsion of some great constructive idea.

The question cannot be answered unless we are prepared to take life as a whole ; only then are we in

a position to pass judgment on its worth. But how are we to grasp it as a whole ? We are, indeed, driven to make the attempt ; our longing for happiness demands it ^the yearning of rational beings who cannot wholly abandon themselves to the passing moment, but are bound to seek some all-inclusive end. Yet, however insistent the demand, however profound the emotion and the passion that prompt it, we cannot satisfy it without going beyond the distinctively human domain. For the life of man is inextricably bound up with the life of the universe : he must ascertain the position he holds in it, regulate his activities with reference to it, and forbear to insist on any happiness which contradicts the truth of things and the truth of his own nature. Is there, then, any way of reconciling man's desire for happiness with the requirements of truth ? This reconciliation of truth and happiness is undoubtedly the cherished dream of all who seek to uphold the significance and the value of life, but whether the dream admits of realization is another question. However that may be, the problem is both persistent and insistent. It has not been devised by any single mind. It is the product of the innermost consciousness of the age ; it is the inevitable outcome of our present stage of development. That a problem

I a

4 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

of such pressing human interest must be also a problem for philosophy will be admitted by all save those to whom philosophy is a byword.

We begin, as is natural, by criticizing such solutions of the problem as our own age has to offer. Though the prevalent confusion of thought forbids our hoping to find in them anything ultimately satisfying, yet it is scarcely credible that they should be so elaborately developed, and win such general approval, if they did not contain some element of truth. They undoubtedly record for us certain forms of human experience ; they give us a broad view over the problem as it exists

for us to-day ; and they may, even by their very unsatisfactoriness, lead our thought on to a decisive parting of the ways, at the same time indicating the direction which we ourselves must follow.

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY

It can hardly be denied that the man of to-day has no sure convictions, either about himself or the meaning of his life. It is not only that he tends to reflect the manifold differences of his environment ; his whole existence is rent in twain by one supreme opposition. An older tradition handed down from the past contends with newer ideals for his undivided allegiance. It is not merely in points of detail that these traditions are at variance ; they ground our life on fundamentally different bases. Hence, in all that concerns life's meaning and value, they are in direct opposition. The older Order, represented by Religion and Immanent Idealism, proclaims the authority of an invisible world which can only be spiritually discerned, and allows to the sense-life a merely derivative and subordinate function, disregarding, or even denouncing, any claim it may put forward to possess an independent value. The newer thought, on the other hand, seeks to explain life without drawing in any way upon the resources of another world. If not within the sphere of our sense-life, then nowhere at all can we know joy and sorrow. Here, if anywhere, must life find its unity and yield up its meaning. Any attempt to overstep these

5

6 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

limits can only be the product of illusion, and lead us hopelessly astray. Both the older and the newer views influence us profoundly, and, in fact, divide our allegiance. Our ideals and our standards of value are determined mainly by the older line of thought, our interests and occupations by the newer. Which shall we decide for in the last resort ? Where shall we find a programme that will make life worth the living ?

The religious interpretation of the world, bequeathed to us from a hoary past, has still a powerful hold upon modern thought. It is, moreover, serenely confident of its own power to give worth and dignity to life. This confidence rests on certain definite assumptions. The world, and man, its inhabitant, are conceived as the creation of a transcendent spiritual Power which can be apprehended only by faith. All the main interests of man's life centre round his relationship to this spiritual Power, the more so since it is held that he is no longer at one with it. The bond has been broken ; he has fallen grievously from the high estate he once occupied. His one supreme endeavour, therefore, is to recover the divine communion he has lost, an end which can be attained by nothing less than a complete transformation of the inner life. There must be a moral rebirth, in which the necessary initial factor is divine love and grace, making possible that which else were impossible to man. This premised, the further appeal is to man's own effort. Not only must

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 7

he held his heart's ready devotion, and faithfully guard the grace he has received ; he must also be a co-worker with God for the establishment of His kingdom upon earth.

With a belief such as this, man might well entertain an exalted view of himself and his life-work. As the express image of God, he stood in the very centre of reality ; it was around him that the wheel of the universe revolved. His conduct decided the fate of the universe decided it, moreover, to all eternity. Again, each individual, however inexorably linked to the facts of the Divine Order, constituted an independent centre of activity, and was looked upon as an end in himself ; nay, more, his decision was necessary to the completing of the whole, which might not dispense with the service of even its humblest part.

Life, as religion conceived it, was full of care, trouble, and pain. The universe was too terribly in earnest,

the contradictions of our human existence far too glaring, to allow of any comfort or happiness in the usual meaning of the terms. In fact, it would seem at first that religion tended rather to increase than to diminish the sum total of the world's sorrow and guilt.

But just here the Divine Power intervened, lifting man above the region of misery and need into newness of life, allowing him to share in its own glory, perfection, and everlastingness, and to attain a fulness of unimaginable bliss. The final triumph of good over evil was forthwith assured, and every detail of man's life made subservient to this great end. It was, indeed, no easy life, but its purpose was lofty and its basis sound. It was no vain show.

For thousands of years this life has sufficed for men.

8 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

It has welded them firmly together ; to countless multitudes it has afforded spiritual stimulus and consolation. But its effectiveness has been bound up with the fact that its foundations have never been called in question. Doubts that arise within the bosom of religion may well give an added glow to its fervour witness Augustine and Luther ; but doubts bearing on religion itself must weaken, even if they do not actually destroy it. It is this more fundamental doubt which has been working in the modern world, and proving increasingly formidable to the interests of religion.

The criticism in which this doubt eventually found expression was directed ostensibly against the doctrinal teaching of religion, and it derived its efficacy mainly from the new insight man had won into the meaning of nature and history. Such criticism, however, would not have been very serious if the old force and fervour had still been burning brightly on the altar. Faith, self-confident and defiant, might even have gained an added strength from the dilemmas of the reason (*credo quia absurdum*). If the effect was otherwise, it was because the feeling of the age had undergone a revulsion. There had been a time a time of upheaval and profound unrest when religion was the moving spiritual force, lord and dictator to the whole of life. Such was the closing period of antiquity. The world could offer no aims worth striving after ; its spiritual existence seemed doomed,

its only resource to lean upon another and a higher world. Faith, with heroic ardour, grappled with this other world, brought it into closest touch with human life, and constituted it the tribunal before which the visible world should approve itself and justify its

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 9

existence. Imagination also soared aloft, potent to clothe the Unseen in concrete form, and make it overpoweringly vivid and impressive. Here, where the deeps of life were sounded, the opposition between human and divine was transcended ; their essential oneness the consoling truth which lies at the base of all religion was made convincingly manifest. It was the heroic age an age that could change the whole face of existence, look on the hardest task as easy, treat the impossible as a commonplace, and hold the Invisible as the most intimate of all realities.

Such ages as these exercise a lasting influence over human life, but their specific quality inevitably perishes with them. For it would be impossible to live continuously in this state of tension. The cord would snap if the strain went on, if life did not sink back to a more stable position. With the slackening of the tension, however, Religion finds herself in a critical state. She can no longer make good her claim as the central authority in life ; her appeal has lost its old direct, convincing force. The human and divine resume their antagonism ; religious facts and experiences lose their vividness ; religion becomes more and more the mere embroidery of a life abandoned to other interests. Now this change dates mainly from the beginning of our modern period a period in which the natural world, so long despised and disregarded, wins a new power of attraction, speaks to man in a new language, and bids him draw fresh courage from fresh founts of inspiration. Man acquires the proud consciousness of his own powers : the problems of the world's work crowd upon him, dazzle him, push far into the background all thought for the salvation of

10 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

the soul. He can scarcely understand a frame of mind

which could centre its thought and care on the spiritual life. So momentous a change must inevitably throw doubt on the religious solution of life's problem ; and the advance of doubt means a corresponding ebb in the religious life, even where its outer forms subsist

unchanged. It loses its old strength and assurance, and degenerates into a mere fluctuation of feeling which never did and never can give to life real fulness of content. Whatever casts a slur on religion, any objection brought against it, now meets the readiest hearing. In particular, men are keenly alive to the fact that there is much in life which religion either ignores or, at best, treats as quite subsidiary. This line of thought naturally tends to the conclusion that the religious reformation of life is really a grievous deformation. That our own world, which envelops us with its wondrous wealth of vitality, should be made to depend on an alien system the very existence of which is problematic, may well seem the height of absurdity. ' Surely,' we seem to hear the objector say, ' this is a method which proceeds from far to near, from uncertain to certain.' We may, of course, find arguments to confute him, and we have certainly no right to accept current opinions as true without further investigation. It is, moreover, indisputable that Religion, in spite of protest and denial, is still a mighty power. Its stimulating, spiritualizing hold upon life, the distinctions it has established, the aspirations it has kindled after infinity, immortality, and perfection these are things which cannot easily pass away. They serve as a standard by which to test all man's efforts after truth and happiness. But, at the

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY ii

same time, the fact remains that the whole situation has changed. Religion [in the traditional, ecclesiastical form],* despite all it has effected, is for the man of to-day a question rather than an answer. It is itself too much of a problem to interpret to us the meaning of our life, and make us feel that it is worth the living.

Immanent Idealism.

Immanent Idealism, with its systematic cult of the Ideal, has for centuries past worked side by side with Religion, now complementing, now opposing it,

and its claim is that it can escape the difficulties of the religious position without sacrificing any of life's deeper meaning. Idealism, like Religion, gives life an unseen basis ; but the Invisible, for Idealism, is not a world existing side by side with the visible

world, separated from it by a distinct line of demarcation ; it is rather that which lies at the root of the visible world, and constitutes its true and deeper nature.

That the universe really possesses this deeper nature, in which its varied outward aspects find unity and coherence, is at once the firm conviction and the indispensable presupposition of all Immanent Idealism.

From this idealistic point of view man is intimately one with the universe. None the less, he holds therein a unique position, and is assigned a distinctive task.

Outwardly he belongs to the visible world, but inwardly he is already alive to the presence of a deeper reality.

For in him the life of the world first attains to a clear

* The words in the square brackets do not appear in the original.

They were, however, suggested by the author himself on the ground that they served to make his own meaning more plain.

12 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

consciousness of its freedom, though apart from man's personal initiative and co-operation such revelation would be impossible. He himself must put forth his hand and take ; he must work and strive. There is a point at which everything depends on him, and he may legitimately hope through the development of his own powers to advance the welfare of the whole. That which above all else gives to this idealistic cult the convincing stamp of reality is that, through the putting forth of spiritual activity against the natural bent, there rises into view an essentially new life, a realm of spiritual values, the world of the good, the beautiful, the true. The man who concentrates his energies on these things, and is wholly absorbed by them, seems to be caught up from the triviality of everyday existence into an inner fellowship with a larger world. His life needs, apparently, no goal beyond itself. It finds its meaning in its own development, its satisfaction in the bliss of fruition. Spontaneity is here opposed to compulsion, the heroic to the commonplace, self-realization to mere utility. It is a life which can only be won through contempt of ease and enthusiasm for work. The supreme condition

of insight is to be spiritually fruitful, notably in the spheres of science and art. Creative work brings every faculty into play, and induces a sound and healthy judgment. It is true that man is, in the first instance, dependent upon himself and his own strength ; but

since his effort furthers the progress of the world, he becomes involved in the larger life he has fostered, and his self-confidence is saved from degenerating into self-conceit. He carries his ideal within him, and may confidently hope to realize it.

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 13

It was after this fashion that life was construed by the old Greek thinkers, and their dominating idea has come up again, time after time, under very various forms. Its most modern expression is found in the life-work of Goethe. Its influence is felt wherever there is an attempt to deal with human experience as a whole. It has a lasting value for all true culture.

And yet, as regards its claim to be the sole guide and interpreter of life, Immanent Idealism fares no better than Religion. Its foundations have been shaken, and the life based on them has lost the force and the depth which are indispensable to its sovereignty, and apart from which it has no glad gospel of enlightenment for man. That reality possesses a spiritual depth, and that, by a deeper insight into the world as we find it, we may set foot in the realm of creative causes, is to the average man of the present day quite as doubtful and problematic as any of the fundamental truths of Religion. The fact is that the beliefs of Immanent Idealism are the product of special conditions : they are the outcome of those rare red-letter days of humanity when, by a happy chance, great personalities have found the stimulus of an appropriate environment. At such times, in the heat and glow of artistic creation, the invisible world became an obvious, uncontested fact, and the indisputable centre of man's life, claiming and obtaining his whole energy and devotion. Spiritual creation was at the same time a moral action, exalting man above himself. But those creative epochs passed away : the best will in the world could not prolong them nor revive them at pleasure. The vista opened up by creative genius faded again as other conflicting impressions poured in. The visible

world was no longer a mere unfolding and manifestation of a world invisible. It was viewed as possessing its own distinctive quality in entire independence of all spiritual Values. The outer world opposed to man's effort a stolid resistance, and even his inner life was singularly irresponsive to spiritual aims. Viewed critically, this life appeared to be rent and maimed by abrupt oppositions, and to be incapable of realizing the organization essential to a rational existence. It may be that these difficulties are no more than the spiritual resources of Idealism are perfectly adequate to cope with, and it is always possible to look upon a severe test as a challenge to one's nobler qualities. But when the complications reach inward, when man feels distracted and weak, when his lower nature holds him back and fetters his upward striving, then the world of his beliefs begins to totter, and he no longer feels that he can reach the Ultimate Reality. Despite all his progress, his deepest longing and desire still remain unsatisfied. The whole idealistic persuasion tends to become a mere adjunct and appendage to a life whose main interests lie elsewhere. It can no longer furnish any sure clue to the problem of human life.

Immanent Idealism has always had to face such criticism, but the task of driving it home has been reserved for our own era. It has been accomplished in two ways. In the first place, more stress has been laid on the blind inevitableness of the universe, the irrationality of human existence, the indifference of mankind in general to really lofty aims. Secondly, we have had impressed upon us the limitations of human faculty, limitations which would seem to shut us out finally and completely from any immediate

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 15

participation in the life of the world. Modern Subjectivism tends to abstract man from the conditions and circumstances of his development, and opposes him to the world from which he has thus been alienated as something different in kind. So placed, he may indeed extend his sphere indefinitely, but he can never leave it to take up a wholly new position. How could

creative spiritual energy manifest itself under limitations such as these, open up the deeper sources of the universe, and give a changed meaning to life ?

Serious as are these doubts and difficulties, they are not in themselves fatal to the influence of Immanent Idealism. But so soon as it ceases to be a fount of inspiration, so soon as it no longer works with the resistless might of a spiritual world, and, instead of itself producing, merely appropriates, carries on and enjoys what has already been produced, its creative energy degenerates inevitably into mere culture, and though this may fulfil a valuable function as part of a wider life, yet it cannot of itself satisfy Ufe's needs and requirements. It can gladden and illumine existence ; it can clothe it in rich and varied hues ; out of its wealth of resource it can pleaseintly beguile us into forgetting the black spots of our human destiny ; but it cannot inspire action on a great, heroic scale ; it cannot bring us into sure and close touch with a imiversal life ; it does not lay upon us grave and imperative duties, but rather leaves everything to our own fancy and inclination. How, then, can it make hfe worth the living ? Do we not usually find something illusory and insincere in it ? Man is bidden be enthusiastic and strenuous in his devotion to a world of spiritual values. He is told to ' interest himself '

16 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

in it, and he urges on himself no less insistently than on others the duty of whole-hearted obedience to thif injunction. But, on the other hand, the culture we are speaking of treats the whole domain of spiritual values as of slight, or at least secondary, importance compared with the great ends of natural and social self-preservation and the varied interests and passions of ordinary life. It takes all our social skill and ingenuity to conceal this discrepancy and to keep up appearances even passably. But we cannot rest our whole life on mere appearance ; we cannot draw from a merely subsidiary belief the power to overcome sorrow and need, the means of deUverance from an intolerable emptiness of soul. Never will culture such as this mere life at second hand bring us any true satisfaction.

In one respect the experiences of Immanent Idealism are the same as those of Religion. Both seem

to show that the effort to reach a new world only leads us astray, and that the fair prospects it holds out to us are bound to prove illusory. Moreover, where high hopes have been entertained, the reaction is correspondingly great ; failure results in deep depression

and the gloomiest doubt. Could it be possible that nature should have endowed man with hopes and wishes which he is bound to cherish, but which no amount of effort can enable him to realize ? Is he merely the victim of illusion when he scorns the immediate sense-world as petty and inadequate, and, through religious faith or creative insight, seeks to enter a new and loftier sphere ? Yet surely no ! No mere illusion could have proved so inspiring or done so much to enrich and deepen life.

To religion we owe the revelation of an independent

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 17

inner world, the insistence on the absolute value of purity of motive for its own sake, the instilling of a lofty seriousness into life, the dramatic tension and interest of a passage through bitterness of denial to the blessedness of belief. It was religion which, breaking through the rigid, narrow limitations of the naturalistic scheme of life, and awakening an overwhelming longing for love and immortality, first gave the soul a true, spiritual history, and made this history central in the history of the world. Immanent Idealism, again, elicited all man's powers and taxed them to the utmost, at the same time inspiring them to act harmoniously together ; it lifted him above the smallness and triviality of his private, particular self into a relation of spiritual communion with the universe, and, by intimately allying truth and beauty, it produced a type of life of rare force and distinction. And the result of it all is that we are left with a sense of many grave claims haunting our life and imperatively demanding recognition. But if the effects of a principle still persist after the principle itself has given way, how are we to deal with the claims which then beset us and the complications they involve ? Can the plant live severed from its root and from all that held it organically together ? Will not the claims which thus survive that which inspired them lose their substance and vitality, their compelling, constraining force ? They can but hover over us like pale ghosts, strong enough

to mar our pleasure in the visible world, but utterly unable of themselves to open up to us another world or to supply a fitting goal to our activity and a meaning to our life.

These are considerations to which man cannot always

18 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

turn a deaf ear. But he may for the moment adopt the expedient of thrusting them as far as possible into the background and directing his attention elsewhere. This is the policy of our whole modern era, and it is strikingly exemplified in the nineteenth-century movement from Idealism to Realism. There is a growing tendency to weary of introspective problems : with youthful freshness and enthusiasm we absorb ourselves in the visible world, which is daily disclosing more of its riches, and here, if anywhere, we expect to discover the meaning and value of life. With this change in the orientation of our interest, life seems- to lose its shadowy, ghostlike character, and to take on a vital, concrete form. It is true that our private preferences must bow in self-effacement before the inviolable laws of the universe. Much must be sacrificed, for, despite all surface expansion, there is a contraction of man's inner life, and his limitations close ever more tightly around him. But within these narrower limits he leads a perfectly untrammelled and catholic existence. He is no longer obliged to dichotomize reality into good and evil, or to arrest and starve any of his faculties. He can follow out any and every impulse, develop without scruple any and every power. Should it not, then, be possible to organize life afresh ? And, whereas the older regime deluded us with promises whose fulfilment it could never guarantee, might we not find in this new synthesis some real justification for optimism ? Humanity has, at any rate, done its best to answer this question. The history of the attempt shows that it has passed through many different phases and assumed very diverse forms, which we now proceed to consider.

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 19

There is no disputing the fact that modern progress has tended to shift the centre of Ufe's interest from the invisible to the visible world. But in the case of the problem we are treating, there have been two phases in the transition one milder, one more acute and we must be aware of confusing them. From the first the visible world was the main object of interest, but it was not for nothing that humanity had toiled so long. There had emerged from its labours an effective record of them to wit, an independent Subject with a self-contained life. Thus a distinction arose between man and world a distinction which, in opposition to the traditional view, became increasingly emphasized, till it was stated with such clearness and distinctness that the main problem thereafter lay in determining how man and world were mutually related. Just as in the first instance it had been necessary, in the interest of truth and clearness, to set a gulf between us and the world, it now became equally necessary to bridge the gulf and effect a new rapprochement with a world no longer distorted by human bias. It was naturally to be expected that this rexmion with the world would act as a powerful stimulus nay, more, that a veritably new Ufe would be opened up a Ufe in which the visible world should play a vastly more important part than it had done at an earlier epoch. And the expectation has been fulfilled. Not only has the world revealed to us the

2 a

20 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

secrets of its nature and history in a way we never dreamt of ; it has also allowed us to mould it more and more to our own uses. More and more we have abandoned our old passive attitude in favour of an active relation to our environment. We find that we can alter and improve that existing state of things which once we accepted as an inevitable fate. Wherever there is misery and need, error and illusion, the modern spirit attacks it bravely and seeks a radical remedy. And the struggle of reason against unreason, waged at every disputable point, has opened up endless

problems and possibilities. Now, the central fact of this new Ufe is Work i.e., the activity which grasps an object and shapes it to man's ends a process which is impossible, in the stringent modern sense, unless we adjust ourselves more and more accurately to the

nature and laws of the object we are dealing with, and assimilate these so completely that our work itself takes on an objective character. Thus, not only in our scientific and technical departments, but also in the spheres of politics and practice, work becomes independent of the subjective opinions and inclinations of the worker ; it builds up its own connections, and evolves its own laws and machinery, thereby giving the human worker a firm foothold and the sure prospect of well-sustained progress. If, then, life, under these altered circumstances, is to have any meaning, it can only obtain it from one source viz., work. And work really seems to supply this meaning : its organizations render human action incomparably more effective, enriching the contributions of the individual and the moment, and imbuing us with the consciousness of our world-wide solidarity. Epochs,

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 21

no less than individuals, are linked together as sharers in a common task. We realize our importance and at the same time our limitations. Where to-day the path seems closed there is yet no need for discouragement, since work opens before us an ever-widening vista of possibilities, and the very fact of grappling with destiny already serves to relieve the pressure of its iron hand. Thus we have a virile, straightforward, purposeful existence, never seeking to pierce beyond its finite horizon, steadily avoiding religious and metaphysical complications. May not human life, we ask, find, Under some such scheme as this, full meaning and satisfaction ? Yes, we reply, it might do so, could the soul but consent to occupy a subordinate position, could we but cease from the attempt to unify our spiritual experience, and stifle even the desire for such unity. But since this is no easy matter, we are at once faced with complications which make us question the value of work and resist the suggested solution. At the outset man threw his whole energy into work, and was dazzled wellnigh intoxicated by the results achieved. That his inner life was not being correspondingly en-

riched was a doubt which never occurred to him for a moment. As the work, however, grew more and more important, and asserted its claims more vigorously against the worker, this doubt could not fail to make itself felt, and the discrepancy between material results

and the claims of the soul became increasingly apparent.

The soul, for ever discontent with mere results, must needs turn back upon itself and ask how its own inward life has profited ; for it cannot but regard this inward life as the end to which all else is, subsidiary.

22 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

Work, on the other hand, with its gigantic and elaborate organizations, is perfectly indifferent to the welfare of the worker who is valued merely as a means, to be used or tossed aside as best serves the purpose in hand. He is only a tool a tool endowed with the property of consciousness. But will the soul patiently endure such treatment ? Will not some elemental longing for a happier, nobler life rise in protest against such degradation ? And there is still a further ground for rebellion : the increasing subdivision and specialization of labour means that an ever smaller fraction of man's total energy is called into play while the rest is allowed to lie idle. Yet for the soul's welfare it is essential that all its powers should be employed, and the arrested development of so many faculties must be felt as an intolerable loss. The soul, again, requires time for quiet, persistent growth, whereas work turns life into a breathless rush and hurry, and knows neither rest nor pause. Thus the soul may easily come to regard work as a foe, and may take up arms, so to speak, in self-defence. The social movements of our own day show up in a vivid light the distraction and unsettlement that ensue. But the problem is not confined to the social sphere : it affects life in all its aspects. Everywhere there is the same danger lest, through too exclusive a devotion to work, we gain the world and lose our soul, lest the victories of labour should mean a lowered standard of vitality, a weakened sense of responsibility, and, therefore, of necessity, an impoverished spiritual life.

With this rift running through our life, the problem of its value becomes hopelessly difficult. For a time we can stifle thought in work, but we cannot in-

definitely work on for work's sake only. Voltaire's recipe to work, but ask no reasons would, if put into practice, degrade us to mere beasts of burden. How can work advantage us if, in the end, its results fail to compass the good of the whole man ? Moreover, the consideration of our position to-day shows very clearly that the progress of our work does not even help us to a personal appropriation of reality : soul and world do not draw together into a Uving unity. Nor does the whole soul challenge the world as a whole and wrestle with it, intent on subduing it wholly to itself. The truth is, rather, that the world of objects remains strange and alien to the soul, despite all its feverish activity. Our efforts fail to give life a content, and the powers more particularly concerned with spiritual creation religion, art, philosophy are most pitifully thwarted and depressed.

Thus, in the conflict between work and soul, life is torn asunder, and we find ourselves in a position which we cannot possibly regard as final. Of the many conceivable ways of escape, that suggested by the main tendency of the modern movement claims our first attention. We refer to the attempt to hmit Ufe still more strictly than the exponents of the work-policy had done to the sphere of immediate existence, giving it within this sphere a perfectly consistent organization, and placing it under the guidance of one dominant aim. The leaders of this movement attribute our intolerable complications mainly to the fact that the older systems still maintain a hold and influence on us which run directly counter to the modern spirit, introducing discord into life. They demand that all these vestiges of the old regime shall be entirely cleared away, and

24 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

that henceforth life's content shall be supplied wholly from the world of sense-experience.

Now, it is a demand of this kind that first brings matters to a crisis, and forces us to decide definitely one way or the other. Nowhere is modem Ufe summed up more forcibly and characteristically than in its

favourite contention that it is possible to find a meaning and value for life without having recourse to another world ; that we do not need to transcend the sphere of immediate existence or postulate a realm of ideas in the background, or, indeed, look anywhere beyond

this world for the good that we seek. The object of this contention is to establish existence on a uniform basis. In this work-a-day world, as nowhere else, we find countless individuals bound together in like interests and hopes ; here, then, is the supreme fount of inspiration, whence our modern movements may draw the strength they need for proceeding on their path of progress and reform. We have here a determined attempt to root life wholly in the world at our feet without renouncing its meaning and value ; whether the attempt succeed, or whether it find in Reality itself its reef of destruction, can be decided only by the inclusive experience of life itself. On this fateful issue everything depends. If the attempt in question prove unsuccessful, then either we must abandon all hope of finding any meaning in existence or must seek new paths that shall lead us beyond the merely empirical sphere. The question manifestly calls for careful and impartial consideration, for it is no mere individual interest that is at stake, but the interests of humanity as a whole. We are here confronted not with any passing caprice of human fashion, but with the resistless pressure of

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 25

the tidal movement of history, urging its way without reference to the opinions and inclinations of any particular age or individual. That the older spiritual solutions have lost their certainty and immediacy it were folly to deny. It also becomes clearer every day that we cannot win a meaning for life from the medley of old and new the chaos of conflicting tendencies which is all that present-day mediocrity can offer us. Thus the attempt to reach the goal through the adoption of a consistent, thoroughgoing Realism has good historical justification. Whether it is destined to succeed is indeed another question.

Realistic Schemes of Life.

The problem, then, is to unify life from the standpoint of our immediate experience : give it, if possible, a meaning ; and, in particular, transcend the intolerable

dualism of subject and object. Modern thought has approached this problem along two different lines. Either it has set itself to find a life that shall be more than merely subjective a world-life which includes man wholly and entirely within its own being, leaving

the subject no shred of independence or it has made the subject itself the central and controlling factor while the world has been conceived of as merely furnishing the environment and serving as a means for securing man's welfare. We shall presently see that each of these alternatives may be further divided, thereby presenting life under a variety of different aspects. At the same time we shall see that no one of these presentations is the mere outcome of theory and reflection, but rather that all alike are the living issue of far-reaching historical movements.

26 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

The Naturalistic and Intellectualistic Solutions of the Life-problem.

As the solutions of Religion and Immanent Idealism have gradually lost their force, nature has come to mean more and more to man, eventually constituting his whole world and his whole being. We do not mean Nature as she is in herself for to modern thought the thing in itself remains a dark and inscrutable mystery but Nature as she appears to man from a certain point of view i.e., from the standpoint of mechanical causation. Though natural science is very far from actually maintaining the identity of the world with nature this being no scientific theory, but merely the creed of a naturalistic philosophy still the creed has its roots in the discoveries of science, and there is to-day a growing tendency to interpret science in a naturalistic spirit. Our modern era began, at the Enlightenment, with the sharp separation of nature from soul. The more insistent the demand for a soulless nature, the more urgent the claim that the soul should exist in its own right. But from the very outset there was something far more imposing in nature's illimitable vastness than in a number of dispersed individualities ; and, as nature's realm continued to expand, it was inevitable that the soul should tend to be drawn within it. Not only has its empirical existence been shown ever more and more clearly to be dependent on natural conditions, but there has been

an attempt to appropriate its very essence, and eventually to fit it wholly into the framework of an enlarged naturalistic scheme. There has been a continually growing tendency to identify science with natural

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 27

science, and reality with nature. If any difference were still felt to persist, it seemed to vanish together with the doubts this solution naturally engendered before the steady advance of a mechanical doctrine of development. This doctrine claimed to assimilate man entirely to nature a nature destitute of all inner principle of cohesion, and possessing no spontaneity of its own. Thus it was proper, and indeed inevitable, that the attempt should be made to give a value to human life when considered as a mere part of a natural process, and to show that it was really worth the living. In spite, however, of all historical justification, this attempt inevitably runs counter to certain inbred tendencies of our nature. Many considerations had combined to recommend the drawing of a very sharp distinction between nature and man. Not only was there the extremely natural, even if not wholly justifiable, motive of man's own self-feeling in the matter ; there was also the wish, by thus exalting him, to stimulate his activity and direct it to high ends. Indeed, the very fact of singling man out for special honour seemed to attest his dignity and his grandeur. He who, on the contrary, assimilates man entirely to nature, and treats his life as a merely natural process, has to face and vanquish the hostility due to this cherished belief in his uniqueness ; but to compass this end effectively he must be persuaded that this hostility is nothing more than the last, lingering protest of an already effete system, and that the loss which its overthrow seems to involve forecasts a real gain. Here, once more, everything depends on the truth of the contention. If true, it would certainly be strong enough to bear down any amount of natural prejudice.

28 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

But how stands it with the question of truth ? Is there room within this scheme for the varied powers and manifold experiences of human nature ? Will

they one and all fit into it ? Naturalism, broadly conceived, has unquestionably many advantages, and appeals strongly to the modern mind. It appears to avoid all the difficulties of dualism, and to make life simple and straightforward. Man is absorbed into

great and complex organizations whose fortunes he is privileged to share. Thus his own life is guaranteed a certain security, and appears subject to an ineluctable necessity. The mists that have enveloped it part asunder, and it emerges into the clear light of day. Moreover, this new order makes great demands on our energy and pugnacity. We are summoned to a fierce campaign against the ingrained illusion and folly of other-worldliness. Since this illusion has made itself universally prevalent, we are called upon to expel it root and branch from every sphere of life, and reconstruct in accordance with the newer way of thinking. We know well what attraction this gospel has for large circles of our contemporaries, and how it appeals with special force to the struggling masses of our population, whose nature it is to let vague total impressions of this kind determine the ultimate form of their conviction.

The difficulties of Naturalism begin when we proceed to investigate it more closely. We then see very soon that it represents life in a characteristically limited way. It excludes much which, after all, may be more than a mere echo of outworn beliefs, of mere illusion and superstition. A life which complies entirely with the mechanical requirements of a merely natural order resolves itself into a mere series of isolated states which

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 29

entirely lack organic connection. What connection there is is purely external ^mere addition and juxtaposition ; there is no inner principle of relationship. The struggle for existence between competing individuals is the law of life's evolution, and life itself is but the system of interactions which this struggle calls into play. No individual can step out of his place in the series, and thus all life is strictly derivative and dependent. There is no room whatsoever for any originality, independence, and free decision. All that we can say about anything is that it has happened. There can be no such questions as Why ? and Wherefore ? Nor can there be any opposing values such as good and evil, but only a greater or a less expenditure of force.

It can hardly be denied to-day that human life corresponds very largely to this description, and that even our psychical life is, to a far greater extent than was formerly supposed, a mere prolongation of the

physical. But the question still remains whether this is the complete truth and a just description of life as a whole. If life have no inner coherency, if it move only in response to stimulus from without and lack all free initiative, if it resolve itself entirely into a tissue of external relations, into mere adaptation to constantly changing environments, then not only is religion doomed, but equally all morality and justice. Art and science resolve themselves into mere trains of detached feelings and ideas, and all such concepts as personality, character, disposition, become mere empty phrases, no less the creations of illusion and superstition than the very convictions of religion itself. Again, what task is there within the naturalistic scheme to challenge our activity ? Are we even justified in

30 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

using the terms ' task ' and ' activity ' ? Nature within and without us pursues an unswerving course ; resistless forces control her every movement. It is not really man who acts ; something acts in him, something that is essentially alien to his nature. His consciousness can only register and observe what is done ; it can neither originate nor change anything. Thus, for all his physical endowment, man would be a mere observer, a mere shadow of the genuine reality, were he not impelled to exert himself in order to rid his existence of error and illusion. The only stimulus to exertion that Naturalism can offer is a call to oppose any attempt on man's part to transcend the limits of nature, a summons to engage in active warfare against human prejudice and superstition. If once the victory were won, if the enlightenment were complete and man put back into his rightful place in nature, it is hard to see what would be left for him to do. His inward development would come to a standstill, and all further achievement would rest with nature, and not with the human will. Thus the real goal of our highest effort would coincide with the complete extinction of all spiritual life.

Now, is it possible for man, the product of a long

historical evolution, to revert to his natural, primitive condition, and, divesting himself of all that makes him distinctively man, to hope thereby to realize his essential nature and satisfy his craving for happiness ?

We doubt it, on this, if on no other ground, that the

very wish to return to nature evinces a mental disposition radically different from anything that mere nature can produce. Why such enthusiasm for a return to nature ? Why should such reversion be considered

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 31

the main goal of life ? Surely because it is supposed to be indispensable to man's happiness and to the truth of his endeavour. But is it possible for him to frame and follow up ends such as these without bringing both the endeavour and its object within the unity of a single experience ? And does not this mean that he ceases to be a mere system of elements externally interrelated, and develops a spiritual inwardness ? Moreover, is not the very idea of truth a virtual transcendence of the sphere of naked fact ? If a man's chief interest and desire be truth, he himself must be more than a mere fragment of nature. Again, the struggle for truth and happiness involves our life in sharp oppositions such as nature, with her slow and cumulative processes, can neither understand nor tolerate. If the exponent of Naturalism fails to see that his conduct violates and contradicts his theories, this only shows how instinctively he breathes the spiritual atmosphere bequeathed to him from an heroic past. For little by little, over against the sense-world, man has built up a spiritual order in the light of which he lives out his natural life. Now, it is true that his spiritual life owes far more to nature than it used to do, and is knit to her by far closer ties ; but this does not imply in the least that it is solely a natural product. For this would be fatal not only to civilization, but equally to science and to all organization of a spiritual kind. And if a system prove self-destructive in proportion as it is more consistently elaborated, if its form and content be diametrically at variance, how should it pretend to interpret for us the meaning of our life ? In fine, what has Naturalism to offer us in this life which it so enthusiastically recommends ? It shows

us a human sphere infinitely small and insignificant in comparison with the illimitable universe which encloses us on every hand, and is supremely indifferent to our

behaviour. It shows us men with no capacity for inner fellowship or for mutual love and esteem, unable to resist the dictates of natural instinct, influenced in their action by one ruling idea, that of self-preservation, a motive which simply involves them in an ever more merciless competition, and cannot in any way conduce to the soul's welfare. The only thing Naturalism can offer in return for all that it takes away is emancipation from illusion and superstition, and a clear perception of man's oneness with nature. But however valuable such enlightenment may be, how can it conduce to nobility of character ? How can it nourish man's inner life and help to develop a spiritual individuality ? Can it give him an added force ? can it put him in more intimate relation with his fellows or with the universe ? can it allow him any conceivable form of initiative ? And if not, can it still convince us that life is worth the living ? Surely not, unless our claims are very modest or our thought unthorough, or, indeed, we steal our opponents' arguments and gradually veer round to their position. He who thinks things out to their logical issue will find that Naturalism leads nowhere : he will find himself driven to negation and despair. It is only through the intensity of her opposition to what she holds to be superstitious and illusory that Naturalism herself can be deceived as to her own emptiness and her lack of any spiritually productive power.

Thus Naturalism is inadequate as an explanation of life. But so far we have not disputed its pretension

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 33

to be supported by the facts of our immediate experience. And so long as this claim remains uncontested, all the fruits of spiritual labour may well seem to be but secondary or supplementary. But are we to-day so absolutely sure that the sense-world really does supply the most immediate and solid basis for life ? It is doubtless immediate and indisputable so long as we surrender ourselves wholly to sense-impressions and sense-perceptions, so long as we do not

think, or so long as our thought remains under tutelage to the sense-world, and never becomes independent. Now, to a large extent, human thinking does remain in such tutelage, and, in so far as it does so, cannot overstep the limits of the natural order. Experience

shows us that a considerable degree of intelligence can be displayed even within these limits. There is no lack of prudence, cunning, and cleverness in the animal world. But all that such intelligence does is to supply us with weapons of self - preservation ; it subserves the continuance of the individual or the species ; but it does not enable us to escape from nature's mechanical routine and to strike out new paths towards self-chosen ends. Intelligence, understood in this limited sense, stands precisely on the same level as any bodily advantage. Cunning and prudence are to one creature exactly what a coat of mail is to another, or nimbleness and agility to a third. Now, to a large extent, this is true of man also. His intelligence is, in the first instance, a mere weapon enabling him to sustain the fierce struggle for existence. But it is also something more, inasmuch as it is able to free itself from its dependence on the sense-world, place itself over against it, and calmly survey it from without.

3

34 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

Such is the significant development of our human thinking. However modest and unassuming thought may be in the first dawning of independence, the insignificant spark may yet burst into a mighty flame that shall spread far and wide, and melt down the rigidity of sense-experience. Can we fail to recognize the drastic character of this revolution ? Man is no longer a mere part of a nature which conditions his thought ; he can contemplate her from without and study her as a problem : he experiences nature and thus lifts himself above her. And he could not possibly do this if his thinking faculty were merely receptive and dependent ; but, by evincing activity in the way we have pointed out, it develops a life essentially different from that which nature shows. Nay, more : the obvious effect of such a development is to reverse the previous position, thought, instead of nature, now supplying the starting-point and basis for life. Confidently, and as a matter of course,

thought claims for itself the true immediacy, and admits nothing which it cannot make convincingly clear to itself. It thus becomes the measure and judge of all things, whilst the sense-life sinks in importance, becomes insubstantial and problematic, and is reduced

to the status of a mere phenomenon the truth of which has first to be discovered. Nor does this change of standpoint affect solely the life of the individual. The same transcendence of sense-experience, the same revolution in the conduct of life, distinguishes the whole progress of humanity. It is alike the presupposition and the result of all real culture. For how could there be any such culture, how could we even conceive of its existence, if thought never freed itself from

THE PROBLEM AS IT STANDS TO-DAY 35

the impressions of sense and proceeded to react on them ?

The onward march of thought, renewing in its progress the very face of life, is the distinguishing feature of our modern era. Thought, with proud audacity, confronts the world, brings forward certain demands of a very exacting kind demands arising from its own nature and insists absolutely that the whole of reality shall conform to them. This revolutionizes the old order of life. Thought is now a swift-footed pioneer. It shakes life out of its former ruts by an insistence on ideas and principles, and seeks to make it express its own inner necessities. That which above all else gives to modern movements their power and passion is the fact that they embody a struggle for the realization of principles. Even the effort to raise the level of material prosperity gathers its main force and influence from the ideas and principles which inspire it. Our whole sense-life is sustained and controlled by a realm of ideas.

Thus we cannot deny that in this development of the function of thought we have a characteristic and influential movement affecting the whole human society and penetrating even to the individual's own private life. This movement, however, comes into sharp collision with the naturalistic persuasion. The one stoutly maintains its ground against the other, with the result that life is drawn in two opposing directions, animated by two radically different motives, and robbed

of all unity of meaning.

We have seen that nature, as she appeals to our modern mind, is a realm of mere brute fact, to which, according to naturalistic belief, all our movements

32

36 THE MEANING AND VALUE OF LIFE

should be blindly subservient : even science should not explain, but merely describe. Thought, on the other hand, seeks to produce its own content, or at least to saturate it with its own activity. It must therefore insist on explaining things and referring them to their origins. However impervious a fact may seem to be, thought seeks to b

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